

*The Winding Road to Stabilisation: Application of Post-conflict Recovery Responses and Frameworks in Zimbabwe*

Trust Mamombe, College of Business, Peace, Leadership and Governance, Africa University, Mutare, Zimbabwe

Jeffrey Kurebwa, Department of Peace and Governance, Bindura University of Science Education, Bindura, Zimbabwe

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*This paper argues that Zimbabwe needs a post-conflict recovery response and identifies priority actions to support a political evolution and socio-economic recovery. The study further suggests immediate steps donors and policymakers can take to heal the wounds of Zimbabweans and lift the majority from miserable poverty. While peacebuilding is a multi-faceted process requiring holistic approaches, it needs to be guided by a hierarchy of priorities established in response to the specific needs and political dynamics in a given context. Establishing such a hierarchy requires an overall political strategy. The people of Zimbabwe like any other post-conflict society must own the reconstruction process. This must go beyond common rhetoric.*

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## **Introduction**

Peacebuilding is a Multi-dimensional enterprise with several pillars. While various actors define these pillars differently, there is consensus that peacebuilding has political, social, economic, security, and legal dimensions, each of which requires attention. Distinguishing it from conventional development, peacebuilding is understood to be a highly political project

involving the creation of a legitimate political authority that can avoid the resurgence of violence. Zimbabwe is in a state of decline. The political and socio-economic situation in the country is fragile and untenable. Political tensions are high. The economy is stumbling. The Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), as the ruling party is to blame for political and socio-economic decay in the country. In any case, this paper assumes that Zimbabwe needs a post-conflict recovery response to heal the nation and promote peace and sustainable development. The Southern African Development Community (SADC), African Union (AU) and the international community should also play a central role in normalising the political and socio-economic climate in the country to help set Zimbabwe on the right path to sustainable peace and recovery.

While peacebuilding is a multi-faceted process requiring holistic approaches, it needs to be guided by a hierarchy of priorities established in response to the specific needs and political dynamics in a given context. Establishing such a hierarchy requires an overall political strategy. Given the dire political and socio-economic conditions in Zimbabwe today, post-conflict recovery strategies should be broad-based; they should not be confined to traditional development practice only but must be informed by recent post-conflict experiences from countries such as Bosnia, El Salvador, and Liberia.

## **Interrogating Zimbabwe as a Post-Conflict Situation**

Zimbabwe exhibits extreme characteristics of a society in violent conflict (Moss & Patrick, 2005). For instance, the collapse of Zimbabwe's economy since 1999 is worse than was seen during full-scale civil wars in some African states. Currently, most youths are living in poverty. Unemployment is at 85 percent. The industry is operating at less than 30 percent capacity. As in war situations, most Zimbabweans now operate in the informal sector. Dube & Makwerere (2012), the breakdown of basic services also depicts Zimbabwe as a country in violent conflict. The country, which was once a jewel of Africa, is now in tatters. State social services are no longer functioning (Sachikonye, 2011). The erosion of state social services has further contributed to the deterioration in already low human development indicators. Most professionals, especially health practitioners fled and are still fleeing the country while resources for the health sector have collapsed.

The erosion of economic foundations such as agriculture has exposed Zimbabweans to abject poverty. The Zimbabwean economy is agro-based, but this backbone of the pre-crisis economy is a shell of its former self. Crop and livestock production have dropped dismally since 2000. From the breadbasket of SADC, Zimbabwe is now begging for food and waiting for hand-outs from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Most citizens in both urban and

rural areas are food insecure. The volume of tobacco exports also dropped by more than 60 percent since 2000. The mining industry has also suffered massively. The dearth of the economic foundation was the result of the land reform program and the departure of the country's commercial farmers.

## **Framework for Regional and International Support of Zimbabwe's Recovery**

The revival of Zimbabwe's political and socio-economic climate requires many elements typically associated with a strategy for post-conflict reconstruction. The first steps should be from Zimbabweans, in sync with 'African solutions to African problems. The issue of ownership of the reconstruction and peace-building process comes to the fore. The people of Zimbabwe must own the reconstruction process. They must be actively involved in setting the agenda and leading the various processes at multiple levels even the highly political processes complicated by the deep wounds of the previous conflicts from the liberation struggle, the Gukurahundi, and 2008 political violent conflicts.

All post-conflict recovery strategies should be informed by recent experiences from other countries as they provide important lessons about the priority tasks for promoting peace, stability, and economic reconstruction. Priority tasks relevant for Zimbabwe include establishing security and the rule of law; fostering political reconciliation and legitimate institutions of government; rebuilding the institutional capacities of the state; and encouraging a comprehensive economic recovery, including timely normalization of relations with the international community and rapid support comprised of aid, debt relief, and private finance.

## **Crucial Political Support**

Cain (2015) attests that Zimbabwe's problems are political. Indeed its post-conflict recovery processes face stillbirth at the political level. As such, getting the politics right is a necessary precondition for recovery. Consequently, the key interventions where regional and international groupings can support Zimbabwean efforts to improve governance include being ready to provide assistance to smoothen the political transition. While peacebuilding is a multi-faceted process requiring holistic approaches, it needs to be guided by a hierarchy of priorities established in response to the specific needs and political dynamics in a given context. Establishing such a hierarchy requires an overall political strategy. The Second Republic is the carbon copy of Robert Mugabe's politics and it should change a lot of things if the country is

to solve its political problems. SADC and AU need to create a regional framework similar to the '6 plus 2' formula for Afghanistan, to help nurture the internal political process and focus international attention.

Security sector reform is also of paramount importance (Chitiyo, 2009). SADC and AU should thus help to reform the security sector. Corruption and the politicization of the security and judiciary sectors have undermined what was once professional and highly regarded institutions. There is a need to persuade the ruling elites to move from a culture of violence and impunity to one of the rules of law. These regional bodies should also support a thorough reform of the security sector, including restructuring the 'power' institutions such as the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), Central Intelligence Officer (CIO), and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), vetting officials for past abuses, training officials in civilian policing and criminal justice, mainstreaming human rights, and disbanding paramilitaries.

## **Necessary Economic Support**

Economic support is also necessary and SADC and AU should play a crucial role in helping Zimbabwe to revive her economy and transform the lives of the general citizenry (Munemo, 2016). Most Zimbabweans are relying on food hand-outs and humanitarian assistance. This means that the post-conflict recovery strategy in the country should focus on humanitarian assistance, especially on the protection of food and health security. NGOs should be encouraged to continue to support efforts to support human security in the country.

To Munemo (2016), the regional and international community should also help formulate and implement a multidimensional economic recovery strategy. Organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, UN agencies, and select bilateral donors should undertake a joint assessment of Zimbabwe's priority needs. These should include evaluations of the infrastructure deficit and other areas that might be privately financed. Any economic recovery should first bring the macroeconomy under control by trying to restore basic public services as well as generating jobs. Priority should be on revising agriculture and the mining sector. The focus should also be on improving land use by reinvigorating the agricultural sector in a manner that provides increased employment and productivity (Chaumba, Scoones, & Wolmer, 2003).

## **Other critical elements**

A commitment to local capacity building from the earliest stages is vital for sustainability and Zimbabwe is no exception. Even for high dialogue process needful between warring political parties must be facilitated and incubated by local leaders and local eminent persons who have

not only vested national interests but are available for the long haul and have sufficient detail about the local and historical conflict cycles.

More often than not time has two dimensions in post-conflict reconstruction. Timely, opportunistic, and quick-impact interventions are critical in influencing peacebuilding outcomes. However, the reconstruction itself is a long-term process, that may take a generation to bear fruit. Rapid response is necessary but not sufficient for success. The Zimbabwe political and economic landscape requires that actors be conscious of the importance of time in justice delivery. Funding of recovery and peacebuilding efforts remains fatally inadequate, unpredictable, and inflexible across the whole peacebuilding landscape to fund essential programs and projects to support post-conflict reconstruction. Appropriate funding mechanisms are indispensable to have an impact on the ground in a timely manner and this has evidently remained an albatross in Zimbabwe's bid for post-conflict recovery.

## Conclusion

As evidenced in this paper, the political and socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe is fragile and untenable. Political tensions are high and the economy is stumbling. Though technically the country could be at peace, it is suffering war-like trauma to its polity and economy. Accordingly, the country Zimbabwe needs a post-conflict recovery response to heal the nation and promote peace and sustainable development. The aforementioned operational principles of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Frameworks must be applied holistically. In fact, a systems-thinking approach that appreciates that every aspect of development and peacebuilding is vitally important to post-conflict recovery must be applied. No effort should be spared in spite of it lying low on the priorities' hierarchy.

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